

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 758

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 3259

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, HO
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH CESAR BATRES

BEGIN SUMMARY: POLOFF HAD CONVERSATION WITH EX-FONMIN BATRES ON JULY 28. BATRES SAID THAT HE WAS SORRY HE HAD ACCEPTED THE POSITION OF ADVISER TO CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR AND REMARKED HE WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE. HE SAID MELGAR IS UNABLE TO ACT AND THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL IS UNABLE TO DEFINE THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE AND POLICIES. HE REMARKED THAT HONDURAS IS GOING THROUGH THE WORST PERIOD OF DIFFICULTY HE HAS EVER WITNESSED. END SUMMARY.

1. POLOFF HAD CONVERSATION WITH EX-FONMIN CESAR BATRES ON JULY 28. BATRES SAID HE WAS SORRY THAT HE HAD ACCEPTED THE JOB AS ADVISER TO CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR AND WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE. HE OBSERVED THAT HE COULD DO LITTLE BECAUSE MELGAR IS HAMSTRUNG BY THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL (SDC) AND IS UNABLE TO DEFINE GOVERNMENT POLICY.

2. HE COMMENTED THAT THE SDC IS UNABLE TO DECIDE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OR ESTABLISH GUIDELINES FOR THE COUNTRY BECAUSE THE MEMBERS CANNOT AGREE AMONG THEMSELVES. HE SAID THAT MAJORITY VOTES ARE NOT TAKEN IN THE SDC BECAUSE EVEN IF ONE GROUP LOSES IT "HAS GUNS", AND THE MAJORITY COULD NOT IMPOSE ITS WILL WITHOUT A THREAT OF ARMED CONFLICT. HE POINTED OUT THAT YKC GATHERINGS TURN INTO CONFIDENTIAL

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ENDLESS MEETINGS BECAUSE THE MEMBERS TRY TO REACH A CON-

SENSUS. HE SAID SUCH A SYSTEM PRODUCES A PARALYZED GOVERNMENT BECAUSE WHEN THERE ARE BASIC QUESTIONS AT ISSUE SUCH AS AGRARIAN REFORM OR A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONALITY THE CONTENDING FORCES BACK OFF FROM A CONFRONTATION AND LEAVE THE ISSUE UNDECIDED. HE SAID THAT THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IS VIRTUALLY ISOLATED FROM THE SDC WITH A CONSEQUENT LACK OF COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING. HE EMPHASIZED THAT NOBODY IN THE CIVILIAN APPARATUS WANTED TO TAKE DECISIONS IN SUCH A SITUATION.

3. HE REMARKED THAT THERE IS NO UNITY IN THE COUNTRY AND UNLESS THE SDC CAN FORMULATE A DEFINED POLICY OF GOVERNMENT AND CREATE A MEASURE OF PUBLIC TRANQUILITY, THE ATMOSPHERE WILL BECOME EVEN MORE DIVISIVE. HE SAID THAT THE PRESENT SITUATION COULD NOT CONTINUE INDEFINITELY AND SAID THAT EITHER MELGAR WILL ESTABLISH HIMSELF AS A REAL LEADER OR SOMEONE FROM THE SDC WILL ARISE TO CLAIM THE "BATON". HE POINTED OUT THAT THE GREATER DANGER IN SUCH A SITUATION WOULD BE THE POSSIBILITY OF CONFLICT AMONG THE LT. COLONELS FOR THAT IGLE. HE FINISHED THE CONVERSATION BY SAYING THAT HONDURAS IS GOING THROUGH THE WORST PERIOD OF DIFFICULTY BE HAS EVER WITNESSED.
SANCHEZ

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